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### *Family Diversity: Continuity and Change in the Contemporary Family.* Pauline Irit Erera.

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He provides a summary of empirical evidence that economic actors are embedded in social relations. For instance, interpersonal ties are shown to play an important role in inter-firm exchange transactions and labor market activities. Research also indicates that social-historical conditions, customs, laws, religion, norms of reciprocity, institutional and political factors influence market exchanges. He offers an interesting example of the way the prison system influences the labor market in the United States. Political factors led to a massive increase in spending on prisons during the 1980s and 1990s. The resulting increase in prison building affected labor supply and demand. While the abundance of jobs created in this industry increased labor demand, the imprisonment of large numbers of low-skilled individuals decreased the labor supply, especially at the low end of the labor market. At least part of the declining unemployment rate seen during this period can be attributed these factors.

Zafirovski presents a comprehensive discussion of economic sociology. He traces its roots to classical sociological theory and summarizes theoretical developments in the field. His discussion of empirical findings related to key theoretical propositions, clarifies points and supports the assertion that social factors have a major impact on economic processes and outcomes. Although his work is very theoretical and may be regarded as some as too dense, this is an important book which offers a useful alternative to the dominant economic paradigm. It shows that sociologists have an important contribution to make to the understanding of economic life.

Pauline Irit Erera, *Family Diversity: Continuity and Change in the Contemporary Family*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2001. \$64.95 hardcover, \$29.95 papercover. [January 15, 2002].

Although the traditional two-parent family is a popular American ideal, it is estimated that three-quarters of households do not fit this ideal type. The two parent- two child ideal may have characterized families in the 1950s but, since then, it has ceased to be the norm. Labor force transitions and gender equity have affected the career and family options of women, and fostered the emergence of alternative family forms during the 1960s and 1970s.

Rather than defining these families as 'non-traditional' and problematic, Erera views new and diverse family forms from in a strengths perspective. Whereas extant family research and interventions were developed within the framework of the two-parent family, this interesting book considers the unique array of issues faced by diverse families. Erera begins by reviewing theoretical conceptions of the family, and empirical trends of family types in the first chapter. The historical and sociological factors affecting family diversity are also traced. After identifying alternative constructions of the family, she provides a comprehensive account of alternative family types. In-depth analyses are provided for adoptive, foster, single-parent, stepparent, lesbian/gay and grandmother-headed families. For each family type, Erera devotes an entire chapter, covering an impressive array of topics. Each chapter begins with the demographic characteristics of one of these family types. The historical background and policy issues related to these types are then reviewed, along with the structure and dynamics of each type. Next, the author presents implications for policy, practice, and research. Each chapter closes with discussion questions.

One of the important contributions of this volume is the careful consideration given to each family form. As Erera effectively demonstrates, this is necessary because of the unique and complex issues facing each family type. Especially impressive is the inclusion of a chapter devoted to grandmother-headed families. The author also gives the reader insight into the challenges facing each family form, such as homophobia for gay families, and the impact of caregiving on grandmothers. Another positive aspect of the volume is the author's sensitive understanding of how family members with more traditional orientations, function in new family systems. For example, she shows how family members adjust after an adoption, and how adoption affects non-residential family members.

In the final chapter, Erera highlights the advantages of diverse family forms. She cites evidence that children from single-parent families typically have many adult mentors, and she refers to research documenting higher scores of parenting skills by lesbian parents. Whereas the alleged weaknesses and social ills emanating from diverse family forms have previously been emphasized,

her use of a strengths perspective offers a refreshing alternative approach. Erera also addresses many of the myths that affect diverse families, including the stigmas of single motherhood and the allegedly negative consequences of parenting by non-biological adults.

The discussions in each chapter touch on a wealth of topics. This is an interesting and pioneering book which will be very useful as a teaching resource for instructors in sociology, social work and related fields. It will also be a helpful reference source for social workers, psychologists and family counselors. It should be integrated into substantive courses addressing family issues, at both the undergraduate or graduate level.

Isfahan Merali and Valerie Oosterveld (Eds.), *Giving Meaning to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. \$45.00 hardcover.

The struggle for human rights, as exemplified in the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, has undoubtedly been one of the great, progressive achievements of this century. The Declaration brought together diverse nations and peoples, securing an international commitment to ensuring that people everywhere had basic rights which would be recognized and upheld. The Declaration also created a shared cultural ethos that pressured recalcitrant nations to accept human rights, and it provided an impetus for the extension of human rights to specific fields of human endeavor. The institutionalization of a rights approach in social policy and social work is but one example of the way the human rights ethos has been infused into these different fields.

Despite the progress which has been made, this book shows that there is little ground for complacency. It is not only that human rights are widely flouted, or that hypocrisy about the implementation of human rights is widespread, but that the international community has placed far more emphasis on civil and political rights than on social, economic and cultural rights. It is this theme which the editors of this useful book address, and which should be of interest and concern to social policy scholars, administrators and social workers.

The editors point out that the Declaration has a truly universal